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ANGLICAN-ROMAN RELATIONS and the Second Vatican Council

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Author's Preface

This is meant to be an interim account of how the development of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church (at the end of 1964) is affecting the evolution of the general ecumenical scene. It is intended in the first place for readers who are members of the Anglican Communion: but it is hoped that other Christians will find it stimulating.

It needs to be borne in mind that the ecumenical situation varies very much from country to country. In England the Church of England is the majority community with a long history of predominance, which perhaps tends to condition her against reform: and the Roman Catholic community is much more conservative than her neighbours in the north of Europe. We may therefore see less results of the Council in England than will be evident in many other parts of the world. In the U.S.A., for example, the situation is more promising from both sides. But in many other countries, especially among the new nations, we are already witnessing developments which will put the old world to shame.

The whole Christian world is now in debt to two successive Popes, John XXIII and Paul VI, who have made this beginning possible; to Cardinal Bea, Mgr Jan Willebrands and his staff who have acted on their initiatives; and to two successive Archbishops of Canterbury, Dr Geoffrey Fisher and Dr Michael Ramsey, who did not hesitate to take their Roman Catholic brethren at their word when they declared for Christian unity.

B. C. Pawley.

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1 The Birth of a New Age

We are living in the midst of the turmoil and evolution of a second Renaissance. We have seen the birth in a few years of a bewildering amount of new knowledge and ideas. People who are still only middle-aged have experienced immense upheavals in their social, political and domestic habits. In the middle of it all those who take life seriously are trying to cling to permanent principles and foundations in order to steady themselves; or are even still only trying to sort out for themselves what are permanent principles of life and what are passing fads and fashions. It is therefore not surprising to find the same kind of unsettlement in the religious side of man's world. The unfamiliar experiences which the new dimensions of life have forced upon him seem to impinge upon his religion at every point. New techniques and methods of investigation have enabled him to inspect and to re-assess, and often to reform, the external apparatus and expression of his religion: and also to look carefully and deeply at the dogmatic bases of his faith. When this process first started nearly a century ago with a 'break-through' in the natural sciences it looked for the moment as though the new age was going to be disastrous for religion; but as the 'renaissance' gathered momentum and more new knowledge began to give a more balanced picture, it gradually became clear that a close 'scientific' examination of religion only served to clarify or to confirm its presuppositions rather than to destroy them. Christians therefore gradually gained confidence in submitting many of the treasures of their inheritance to the microscopic gaze of a critical examination. The scriptures, Church tradition, liturgy, doctrine, the Church itself, and now last of all Christian morals, have one by one been submitted to the same realistic appraisal.

It is against this whole background that the 'ecumenical

movement' is to be understood. The Church itself, its nature, its organization and its life have been put under close scrutiny. A critical examination both of its doctrinal basis and of the pastoral needs of the age has convinced many that the Church was evidently meant by Christ to be one; and that its chaotic divisions are a scandal to Christendom and an evident hindrance to the preaching of the gospel in the modern world. To those who first felt impelled to make a start on the road back to unity the journey must indeed have seemed a long one. The act of faith involved was considerable. As in the case of so many prophetic declarations of the past, it was met with opposition within the Church itself. Those who didn't actually believe it to be wrong thought it impossible of achievement. But the movement grew in strength from its first public appearance at Edinburgh in 1910 through to the era of the World Council of Churches. Its onward march was evident at the time of the great assemblies, at Amsterdam, at Evanston and at New Delhi. The Church of England was first faced with it as a reality concerning herself when the South India scheme was proposed; and now she is involved in conversations at home with the Presbyterians and the Methodists; and, in conjunction with her sister provinces of the Anglican Communion, in further schemes for amalgamation in all the continents of the world. All these developments have taken place within a very few years. They have been given impetus and urgency by the demands of the pastoral situation in the Churches founded among the new nations, but they are also part of the Church's effort to adjust herself to the new realism of the mid-twentieth century; for Christians have taken a close look at the Church as they have inherited it and have seen clearly that above all things it was defective in unity. The reasons which were alleged to be dividing the Church and making co-operation and reunion impossible have been seen to be insufficient to justify continued estrangement, still less to warrant hostility.

The 'ecumenical movement', however, was until 1960 subject to a severe limitation, in that it did not include within its purview the Roman Catholic half of Christendom. And the

Roman Catholic Church itself, officially, saw no reason why it should be involved in the struggle of other Christians to regain the unity which had been lost, for it was satisfied with itself as the one only Church, sufficient to itself, with no obligations to other Christians at all. Many of the people who took the ecumenical movement seriously, and who tried to be involved in it, left Roman Catholics out of their picture altogether. It was taken for granted, without serious discussion, that Roman Catholics could not, or would not, now or in the foreseeable future, be able to play any part in the recovery of unity. And there were even some who thought that the whole Roman conception of Christianity was so alien to that of the rest of Christendom that understanding was not possible. Total union was therefore, to them, neither possible nor desirable. The only conceivable goal to work for was a pan-Protestant union, which might possibly be open to the Orthodox as well, providing that the Orthodox were prepared to become good Protestants. This pathetically limited and faithless view of Christian unity has fortunately been put right out of focus by the act of Pope John XXIII in calling the Second Vatican Council, and in the flood of new ideas and attitudes which that momentous event has let loose upon the world. For both by the terms of its original calling, and also because of the course it has taken, the Council has definitely and irretrievably involved the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement. And although the terms on which she is able to do so will, even at the end of the Council, undoubtedly fall short of what her own more liberal members or fair-minded Christians outside her would wish, nevertheless the commitment is there. And by being there it must certainly transform the polarity of the whole enterprise of restoring the unity of the Church. Unity, oneness, wholeness, from this point onwards really comes into view, albeit into a very distant prospect indeed. But between that and the limited caricature of that same vision which left Rome out of the picture there is a world of difference.

The appearance of the Church of Rome on the ecumenical stage should not have been so much of a surprise as apparently

it has been to many. Those whose duty or pleasure it was in the past quarter-century to watch and to evaluate the revival that has been going on within her, at least in northern Europe, were prepared for such a 'breakthrough'. For where there is honest and realistic research into biblical, liturgical, pastoral and doctrinal first principles, such as has characterized the life of those parts of the Roman Church in recent years, then clearly someone must sooner or later touch off explosive material. The unexpected element in the situation as it developed was that it should have been a pope who touched the trigger of reform. The situation, then, represents a satisfactory development, a necessary stage, in the evolution of the ecumenical movement. Now all the major confessions, representing more than ninety per cent of Christendom, have shown themselves willing and able to enter into the kind of discussions and activities which must be the preliminaries to the improvement of relations. The ecumenical movement has now, and only really now, begun.

It should be emphasized that although this new situation has come about, the official relationships between the Roman Catholic and the other Churches of the world are not thereby changed at all. In fact the sad truth is that they do not even exist. The rupture between the Roman Catholic Church and, for example, the Church of England is officially still total and absolute, and there is at the present moment not the slightest indication that it should be modified. But unofficially, of course, the sharp outlines are beginning to be blurred by the bright light of 20th-century investigation, and friendship and exchanges of ideas on an increasing scale have been the happy characteristic of the last two decades. Now, in the context of the Second Vatican Council, the beginnings of relationships can be seen to be emerging. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have appointed their 'Liaison Officer in Rome', and the Anglican Communion has been fully represented at the Council by delegated observers. One result of the Council will undoubtedly be that these discussions, this 'dialogue', to use the current phrase, will be able to be entered upon with official approval

for the first time on both sides. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the relationships between these two bodies should become a matter of common interest and discussion among ordinary lay members of both of them. For schemes and suggestions hatched by ecclesiastics and theologians in their assemblies and faculties can be of no use unless and until they are digested and assimilated by the lay people of the whole Church. The starting point of such discussion and meditation must clearly be the consideration of the present state of separation, as it has been received as a legacy from the past.

2 The Legacy of the Past

The present divisions of Christendom are an unhappy inheritance from the past. All Christians now living have been unconsciously conditioned by the events of history, by political, racial, cultural and economic quarrels and differences in the past which have tortured and distorted the face of Christendom into its present shapelessness. Religious, ecclesiastical and doctrinal quarrels are difficult to disentangle from their counterparts in secular history; so that the whole picture is one of unbelievable complexity. With the very rare exception of those few who have migrated from one Church to another for reasons of conviction, most people's religious allegiance is what it is because they were born that way. The Italian or the Irishman is a Roman Catholic, the German or Scandinavian is a Protestant, it would seem, by accident of birth. Yet when most Christians come to discuss, even more to defend, the rightness of the group to which they belong they speak with the conviction of neophytes, as though the past had never happened. When a man says 'I am a Catholic' or 'I am a Protestant' he is often telling us no more than that he has certain prejudices, which he has never examined, but which he has only inherited because of certain accidents of birth and circumstance. In the case of relations in England between Roman Catholics and members of the Church of England the whole question has been bedevilled by the history of the Tudor period, and by the evils of Anglo-Irish misbehaviour for the past four hundred years. English Christians of the present day would therefore do well to have a backward glance at their religious history to see if their divisions look as real and formidable after such an examination.

Leaving aside the early smaller separations of the fourth and fifth centuries, the first major division of Christendom was that

of the eleventh century in which the whole Church split into two halves, corresponding mainly to the territories of the eastern and western empires. This was a miserable affair due to a series of diplomatic bungles, representing little more than a resistance by the Apostolic Eastern Patriarchates and the Byzantine emperors to the increasing claims of the papacy. In its first centuries it was never regarded as a permanent 'split', each side speaking of the other as being the 'eastern' or 'western' half of Christendom, or as the 'Greek' or 'Latin' Church. There were no deep dogmatic differences involved: the orders and sacraments of each half were recognized by the other. The Council of Florence (1438-45, on the eve of the Reformation) met with the object of effecting a reconciliation and succeeded in making it on paper, though most of the independent Orthodox synods afterwards refused to accept the decrees. The Roman Catholic Church subsequently began to regard the events of the 11th century as a deliberate 'split away' on the part of the Eastern Orthodox and to speak as if she alone, from that time on, were the whole of the Church. Yet under the influence of the new ideas in the Second Vatican Council she is now beginning to reconsider this position and to recognize once more the full Church-status of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchates. These events as such have had little direct influence on Anglican-Roman relations, except in so far as they were probably responsible in the first place for the stiffening of the Roman Catholic attitude to all other Churches. In view of the exclusive claims of the papacy it is not surprising that when the Anglican looks back to Christian antiquity he is inclined to find it more convincingly reflected in the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, etc. than in the Church of Rome; and he therefore often feels a nostalgic affinity towards Orthodox Christians. But it is important to remember, when these matters are being discussed, that the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the creeds was already divided more than once before the Church in Britain felt impelled to separate from the 'Roman' or 'Western' part of the Church.

It was the upheavals of the Renaissance and the Reformation

which effected the separation of the Church in the British Isles from the main body of western Christendom. 'This great upheaval in human affairs', as it has been described by Pope Paul VI, occupied the lives, the minds and the activity of Europe for more than a century. It was a movement so far-reaching that it is difficult to set it a beginning or an end. We have already referred to the present age as a second Renaissance, and we shall end by expressing the hope that it will lead to a second Reformation, which this time might succeed in uniting Christians instead of dividing them. The first Renaissance was an age in which not only a vast new field of knowledge was opened to man's mind, but in which also whole new categories of thinking were introduced to him for the first time. Religious people were stunned by the discovery that men could read the scriptures for themselves in their own language for the first time. Creditable teachers were not only undermining the philosophical conceptions in which the doctrines of religion had thitherto been expressed, but were even questioning some of the more recent mediaeval doctrines themselves. Some dogmas were attacked as being unwarranted additions to the catholic faith, which the plain reading of the scriptures could not support. Chief among these were the doctrines concerning salvation (merit and justification) and concerning the mystery of the Eucharist, as will be seen later (p. 24). The reformation of doctrine, if that had been all that was needed for the peace of the Church, might have been accomplished by a council, if one had been called in time. But unfortunately the same glare of the Renaissance, which, when shed upon doctrine, had revealed things which seemed to be in error and to need correction, when turned upon the life of the Church itself had revealed gross moral abuses which needed drastic reform. The way in which the doctrine of salvation by 'merit' was preached had led in effect to a gross traffic in pardons, shrines and pilgrimages, and to a preoccupation by the faithful with the supposed duty of enlisting the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. The late mediaeval teaching about the Eucharist had led in practice to a trade in 'masses' which was an offence to the consciences of

many (what in these days we should call a ‘racket’). On the continent of Europe the voices of prophetic reformers cried for a council to hear their difficulties, but no council came. Add to this explosive situation two further matters of a political nature. First, the papacy had for centuries been embroiled in the politics of European nations (the kings of England had had frequent struggles with the popes for five centuries). At the beginning of the 16th century, when its power was most needed to steady the rocking ship of the Church, the papacy was enfeebled by moral and social corruptions which were the scandal of Europe, and was rendered helpless by its own entanglements in European politics. The second element in the situation was the growing power and ambitions of the princes of the nations of northern Europe, for whom the religious crisis as it developed was going to provide an irresistible opportunity for aggrandisement. The whole situation was one which could only end in division. The popes, surrounded and sometimes personally compromised by corruption, believed by many to have ‘erred concerning the faith’, were helpless to control the Church in her hour of need, and gave no effective lead. The provinces where the need for reform was felt to be intolerable had no alternative but to carry out their own Reformation. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Papacy is not regarded hopefully even today by large numbers of Christians as the rallying point for the re-integration of the unity of the Church. There is no space here to trace the history of the Reformation in England in detail, but only to remove one general misunderstanding. The separation of the Church of England from Rome has sometimes been supposed to date from the time of Henry VIII, and has therefore been unkindly associated with the sordid matter of his divorces. But it should be remembered that Henry VIII lived and died (in his own conscience) a loyal son of the Church, and had certainly never intended to make permanent divisions in Christendom. The English Sovereign is still known as ‘Defender of the Faith’—because of a tract which Henry VIII wrote in defence of traditional doctrines of the Eucharist against Protestant innovations. His objective in his legislation was only to reject the temporal

sovereignty of the popes in England. He destroyed monastic establishments because they were too powerful and too rich, and because they were enclaves of papal power in the midst of his dominion and as such threatened the security of his government. He had commanded certain other reforms in the Church because the popes had failed to call a council in time of need—and he had indeed savagely punished those who resisted his will. There is no doubt that Henry's reasons for declaring himself Head of the Church of England* and the final appeal in all causes both secular and religious were almost entirely political. Much respect therefore can and should be given by Anglicans to the memories of Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher of Rochester (who were martyred and who have now been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church), because they felt unable to agree to Henry's usurpation of papal authority. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that papal authority was seriously discredited, both as making arrogant claims for itself (some of which have since been discarded), and as being helpless to control the Church in time of great need.

In the time of the young weak Edward VI a serious attempt was made by some extreme enthusiasts of the Protestant Reformation on the continent of Europe to capture the Church of England, and they found many ready-made sympathisers, especially in the universities. But fortunately the sound pragmatic instinct of the English people prevented the swing being too violent. The true embodiment of the Reformation in England is to be found not in dogmatic treatises but in her liturgical formulas. The Book of Common Prayer fulfils its intention of preserving as much as possible of traditional faith and order, referring it to the standards of the scriptures and the universal catholic faith, while at the same time avoiding submission to rigid dogmatic systems. The Church of England, being reluctantly, and it was hoped only temporarily, separated from the communion of the other parts of Christendom, aimed at remaining part of the One Church rather than a new confes-

* Queen Elizabeth I repudiated this title and it has not been used since.

sion. Its earliest struggles to freedom were impeded by the accession of another of Henry's children, Mary Tudor, to the throne. The reign of 'Bloody Mary' is a byword of English history, and was a time of great persecution and distress. She restored the connection with Rome and immediately cancelled the reforms which had been introduced under Edward VI. During her reign many martyrs suffered death for the liberties of the Church of England, notably Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bishops Ridley, Latimer and Hooper. When Queen Elizabeth succeeded on Mary's death in 1558 she was faced with a most complicated and dangerous situation. The country was evidently tired of Mary's disastrous reign and the people were clearly hoping for the reintroduction of the previous reforms. Extreme Protestant enthusiasts, drawing most of their strength from continental sources, were still trying hard to capture the favour of the Queen and the control of the Church. But Elizabeth, who was by no means an insincere woman in her own religion, could see that as a Christian prince her evident duty was to keep the peace, i.e. to keep as many people as possible within the communion of the English Church and not to be coerced by dictators from either side. The Church was clearly unable to govern itself, because of continual dissension. The young English nation needed religious peace as much as it needed security from foreign invasion. The popes were traditionally allied to England's chief maritime enemy, Spain, and, as Elizabeth rightly guessed, would not scruple to reintroduce the Roman Catholic faith by force of arms. The Spanish Armada was eventually to threaten these shores in 1588. But from the beginning of her reign Elizabeth and her ministers decided to bring an end, as far as possible, to religious dissension by 'establishing' that form of the Christian faith, catholic and reformed, historic and scriptural, which the Church in these islands now seemed determined to profess. After her continual and defiant refusals to respond to the Pope's invitations to 'return to the fold', she was formally excommunicated, and her subjects released from their allegiance, by the Bull 'Regnans in Excelsis' of 1570. Thus the Pope by his own act established

himself and his office as a political enemy of England. It was this act which effected the final separation of the Churches in England, Wales and Ireland from Rome. It is therefore important to remember that the intention of the Church of England was only to achieve what seemed to be a necessary jurisdictional independence. It was the Church of Rome which, through its head, repudiated the English Church entirely from its communion. But who in that case are the 'separated' brethren? With this direct threat to the loyalties of Englishman and with the further threat of invasion by the Spanish Armada which the Pope was encouraging, it is not surprising that all Roman Catholic emissaries coming into the country from abroad were treated as spies, and that many of them were executed as such. This political quarrel with Rome turned estrangement into bitterness. The notorious 'Gunpowder Plot' gave further strength to the belief that the papacy was a foreign political agency determined if possible to restore the corrupt mediaeval doctrines by force if necessary. To this cause can be added the ill feeling which has naturally been engendered by centuries of political and social oppression of the population of Ireland by successive British governments. When the immigrations of the 19th century brought thousands of Irishmen into Great Britain, who to this day form the main body of the revived Roman Catholic Church in Britain, it is not surprising that they brought their resentment with them, nor is it surprising that their coming revived religious prejudices which were on the way to being forgotten. The long period of repression and retributive action against Roman Catholics in Britain, from the Reformation to the 19th century, which is one of the blots on British social history, was just coming to an end when the Irish immigrations began. So the process of irritation continued.

These hideous episodes which in origin were quite largely political, and are now psychological inasmuch as they have become largely unconscious memories, have befouled the whole ecumenical outlook. It is still an effort for thousands of sincere Christians on either side of the quarrel to regard one another dispassionately, for even theological discussions are often

unwittingly embittered by unconscious memories of the long political struggle. Both sides have their martyrs to remember and to honour. Both sides are organized to compete for the soul of Britain, and find it difficult to think of the evangelization of the largely de-Christianized population without thought of proselytizing. But it is imperative that all who 'love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity' should make a positive act of will against prejudice (to say nothing of bitterness). For 'ye have not so learned Christ'. The errors and scandals of history are not the fault of the present generation: their only fault can be that of wanting to persevere in the divisions caused by the past, or of being unwilling to rethink the causes of division right to their depths. But insofar as some (perhaps most) of the causes of estrangement are so deep that we are unaware of them, the whole enterprise of seeking union must be made primarily a matter of prayer; and that exercise could well begin with mutual penitence on behalf of ourselves and our erring ancestors. Pope Paul VI, at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council said:

'If we are in any way to blame for that separation we humbly beg God's forgiveness; and we ask pardon too of our brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us. For our part, we willingly forgive the injuries which the Catholic Church has suffered, and forget the grief endured during the long series of dissensions and separations.'

Every well-meaning churchman will wish to respond in similar terms. This repentance and mutual forgiveness is an excellent start. But it will remain sentimental and ineffective unless it is followed up by a deliberate mutual effort to examine the causes of difference, to abandon error when it is discovered and to seek the truth wherever it may be found. This search for the truth has already begun to make all the Christian Churches realize that they have been warped by long years of separation, and that they still bear the scars of the contentions which divided them. The centuries-old struggle of the Church of Rome to keep her unity and to guard the faith against the onslaughts of rationalism and unbelief has left her with an almost

entirely legalistic idea not only of her own status but of most departments of theology. She is therefore an exclusively 'high' Church. She resembles what the Church of England would be if the fathers of the Oxford Movement had been able to exclude everybody who did not subscribe to their teachings. On the other hand, the long fight for their freedom by the Church's prophets and for the rights of the individual Christian has caused Protestants to forget the essential importance in Church life of organic unity. They therefore lack the world-wide cohesion and discipline which gives the Roman Catholic Church its effectiveness. Again, the heroic struggle of the Orthodox against belligerent Islam has left them with an introverted suspicion of every theological speculation since the beginning of the Crusades. The Anglican Church no doubt, while claiming to be really 'catholic', and to contain the excellences of all these types of Christianity under one roof, has also suffered in her own particular way from her history. For in her attempt to embrace all types she has suffered the weakness of internal dissension. She can indeed hold up an example of catholicity to all, but she also bears the scars of almost every known Christian contention.

The task of the ecumenist then must be to liberate and to forgive, and in so doing to find new life for himself and for the whole Christian body.

3 Present Doctrinal Differences

Doctrinal differences must always be seen against the background of the political and psychological factors to which we have been referring, and which in some cases were their source of origin and in most cases have been a cause of their aggravation. No one examining the formulas of the Reformation period, for example, can fail to detect the note of defiance and exaggeration on both sides of the conflict which has been responsible for the deflection of truth. Yet in spite of the undertones there are differences which represent religious convictions so deep that they involve each side in convicting the other of serious error.

Very roughly speaking the doctrinal differences between the Anglican Churches and the Church of Rome can be stated as follows. The Church of England in the 16th century accepted the general position of the reformers, which was that the Church of Rome (with whom she was then still in communion) had in mediaeval times added to the catholic faith (which was that of the first four councils, because they cover the period of the undivided Church) certain doctrines which did not belong to it. The new learning, and the new understanding of the scriptures which resulted therefrom, had made it difficult to recognize contemporary religion in many of its features as a descendant of the religion of the apostles or of the faith once delivered to the saints. When the popes were unable, or unwilling, to call a council to rectify the matter, the Church had no option but independently to declare (*faute de mieux*) that the catholic truth was in danger, and therefore to take the necessary steps, in the area for which she was responsible, for its preservation. This she did by declaring the three catholic creeds to be the main normal standard for Christian belief; and then by setting out a set of articles by way of interpreting the creeds. These

were not held to be final and infallible (since even the decrees of General Councils could not be held to be so) but rather were a statement of how the catholic faith was to be interpreted in the light of theological controversies then raging. The Church of England would now, by a very large majority, declare that the 39 Articles are in need of total restatement (and in some cases of actual revision) in the light of present theological understanding and of contemporary problems and needs. Herein, of course, lies the core of the difference with the Roman Catholics. They hold that God reveals his truth to his Church by means of General Councils (which now means councils only of the Roman Catholic Church), in statements which are in their literal sense infallible and for ever irreformable. Thus Roman Catholics have a 'fundamentalist' understanding of the faith, which consigns truth to written formulas and believes it to be for ever frozen therein. It is ironical how extremes seem to meet—the 'high church' Roman Catholic treats the formulas of councils in the same way as the Protestant 'fundamentalist' treats his Bible. One is tempted to wonder whether they are but different embodiments of the same original mistake—that of supposing that God speaks like the oracles of classical antiquity, instead of as a living spirit continually inspiring his Church.

The Anglican view, and in fact the view of the whole catholic world outside the Roman Church, is that God does indeed reveal himself as truth which is infallible, but that that truth is only fallibly perceived by the Church in its onward march through the centuries. But the verbal formulation of truth should be continually scrutinized and is always subject to reformulation. The belief that the Holy Spirit of God leads the Church 'into all truth' is thus differently interpreted at source, and from that all other divergences can be said to flow.

The impact of the combined phenomenon Renaissance-Reformation upon the doctrinal formulas of the Church of Rome and the Church of England was that the latter reduced the list of things to be believed 'for salvation' to the three catholic creeds, while the Roman Church expanded even

further its list of formulas by the decrees passed at the Council of Trent, all of which were binding on the faithful. Since then she has added the decrees of the First Vatican Council (chiefly that on the Infallibility of the Pope) and the two separately defined dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Bodily Assumption (1950) of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To these will be added the dogmatic definitions of all future councils: though at the time of writing it does not look as though the Second Vatican Council will do anything more in the doctrinal field than to put out some official explanations and elucidations of doctrines already held. Thus the Roman Catholic believer finds himself called upon to believe, as a credal minimum, a very much heavier load of doctrine than the Anglican. The Anglican Church regards its basic credal statements as the Apostles' Creed, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan and the 'Athanasian' Creeds. The 39 Articles were offered (in some provinces only) as a 16th-century guide to those formulas, but are liable to revision. They are not therefore in any sense infallible. The Roman Catholic Church, however, has an elaborate formula of belief to which anyone joining her is expected to give assent, though even this is only a summary of the decrees and canons of 21 councils, all of which are held to be infallible teaching and to all of which a Roman Catholic professing 'the faith' is understood to assent. In giving the summary statement we have italicized the phrases which the *whole* of the rest of Christendom would regard as an unwarranted addition to the faith, and therefore erroneous:—

'No one can be saved without that faith which the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church holds, believes and teaches. The Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church is the one true Church established on earth by Jesus Christ. I firmly believe all the articles that she proposes to my belief; I reject and condemn all that she rejects and condemns and I am ready to observe all that she commands me.'

I believe one only God in three divine Persons, distinct from and equal to each other—that is to say the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the personal

union of the two Natures, the divine and the human; the divine Maternity of the most holy Mary, together with her most spotless virginity; and also her *Immaculate Conception* and her bodily *Assumption into heaven*; the true real and substantial presence of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with his *Soul and Divinity* in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist;

The seven sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind: that is to say, Baptism, *Confirmation*, Holy Eucharist, *Penance*, *Extreme Unction*, *Holy Order*, *Matrimony*. I also believe in *Purgatory*, the resurrection of the dead and everlasting life;

the primacy, not only of honour, but also of jurisdiction, of the Roman Pontiff, successor of St Peter, prince of Apostles, Vicar of Jesus Christ; the veneration of the Saints and of their images; the authority of apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and of the Holy Scriptures, which we must interpret and understand only in the sense which our Holy Mother the Catholic Church has held and does hold, to whom alone it belongs to judge of their meaning and interpretation,

and everything else that has been defined and declared by the sacred Canons and by the ecumenical Councils, especially by the holy Council of Trent, and by the Council of the Vatican. With a sincere heart, therefore, and with unfeigned faith, I detest and abjure every error, heresy and sect opposed to the said Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.'

To Anglicans it is most difficult to understand how this statement, let alone the whole body of doctrines of which it is a summary, can seriously be regarded as the modern appearance, in direct succession, of 'the faith once delivered to the Saints'. But one thing which the Second Vatican Council has taught us is that there are now thousands of Roman Catholics themselves who feel oppressed by this weight of doctrine and who in loyalty are trying to disencumber themselves of what is unessential, if possible without disturbing the foundations of the faith and without straining the faith of the weaker brethren. Not a few priests have felt compelled to lay down their office, in many countries (especially in Italy itself), because they cannot go on teaching as apostolic and infallible so many items which they can see to be of more recent origin; and there are in many countries laymen who are listless and rebellious because of this same situation.

The general Anglican position with regard to the points at issue is that all doctrines which are additional to the formula of Nicaea are superfluous to a necessary basic understanding and acceptance of the catholic faith; and that some of them are even contrary to Christian truth as contained in the scriptures and in the real catholic tradition of the undivided Church. Some again have been unwarrantably defined without the authority of any council at all (as in the case of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the B.V.M.) and many of the others have been defined by councils which were not catholic because large sections of Christendom were not represented at them (especially the last two councils of Trent and Vatican I). There are other doctrines which are able to be held in the Church of England, though they are not taught as necessary to salvation. Others involve only differences in forms of words. It is, for example, impossible to say that Christ 'instituted the sacrament of Matrimony', but the Church of England naturally receives it as a Christian tradition on which Christ's teaching impinges, and which is of a sacramental nature.

There is no space in this brief account to argue the case of the differences, but only to state them, and to give an outline of the reasons for the divergence.

1. 'No one can be saved without that faith which the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church holds.' There are many accredited Roman Catholic teachers who would now wish to amend this statement. In any case it misuses the word faith, for in this context faith is made to mean a set of dogmatic propositions, whereas it is in fact a spiritual disposition and a quality of life.

2. 'The Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church is the one true Church established on earth by Jesus Christ.' It is evident that there are more genuine apostolic Churches (especially the Churches of Jerusalem and of Antioch) which were established before Rome and have never been subject to her. And it is not possible to deny membership of the one Church to those who have been validly baptized (as many Roman Catholic theologians would now admit). The One, Holy,

Catholic and Apostolic Church of the creeds is therefore clearly more extensive than the Church of Rome.

3. ‘The divine Maternity of the most holy Mary, together with her most spotless virginity; and also her Immaculate Conception and her bodily Assumption into heaven.’ The first two of these can of course only be accepted in the sense in which they are recorded in the scriptures and were believed by the catholic tradition of the undivided Church; but the latter two have not been validly defined and therefore cannot stand part of the catholic faith. The Church of England uses the five festivals celebrating the events recorded in Holy Scripture concerning the B.V.M.; and no doubt at any subsequent revision of the calendar would be willing to agree with the Holy Orthodox Church in including the ‘Dormition’, or Falling Asleep, which is a different matter from the Assumption.

4. The ‘true, real *and substantial* presence of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . together with his Soul and Divinity in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist.’ This is commonly known as the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and implies for the faithful a whole body of philosophical interpretations of this simple mystery. Together with it is held (though not here directly stated) the doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Both these doctrines as commonly held by the Roman Church are repudiated by the Church of England, the latter in the form ‘the sacrifice of masses.’ They are repudiated *as necessary for salvation*. In both cases the Church of England refuses to define these matters exactly, as not being in need of definition, and because of her desire to include as many interpretations and insights as do not compromise the faith (which is the real instinct of ‘catholicism’). That there is a ‘real presence’ at the Eucharist she would not deny. But she also knows, like a wise mother of her children, that to define the locus and the nature of that presence too exactly does in fact encourage superstition—which has been, alas, the observable effect of too elaborate eucharistic devotion in large parts of the Roman world. The Anglican liturgy, likewise, speaks of a sacrifice in connection with the Eucharist, but there is an obvious danger of confusing

the eucharistic sacrifice, by such terminology, with the unique sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. The Church of England makes no teaching on this matter binding on the consciences of the faithful.

5. ‘The seven sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ’. This is not a deep divergence, and could probably be adjusted by a revised form of words. The Church of England uses all these ministrations but feels bound to acknowledge the plain historical fact that Christ did *not* ‘institute’ Confirmation, Unction or Matrimony. The Church of England’s incomprehensible Article 25, on the other hand, makes it difficult to say what her position in this matter really is. One of her first contributions to union should be the revision of that ambiguous formula.

6. ‘Purgatory’. This belief, as elaborated by the Roman Church in connection with the doctrine of ‘merit’, is particularly rejected by the Church of England and was one of the principal causes of the Reformation everywhere. The idea of a quantitative ‘treasury’ of guilt or merit stored up for retribution or reward in a future state is indeed one for which there is apparent justification in scripture if the parts of scripture are to be interpreted separately. But as literally interpreted in Roman practice it leads to habits of mind which are prejudicial to other major principles of religion. The Anglican Church perhaps owes its people the duty of clearer teaching on the whole question of the after life, but she will never be willing to transgress that principle of deliberate agnosticism on the matter which can be found in the scriptures themselves.

7. The ‘Primacy . . . of the Roman Pontiff’. Here the divergence does become rather deep. The whole group of doctrines surrounding the papacy are the biggest single obstacle to Christian reunion. Yet, as will be shown below, there is much that non-Roman Christians can do to bring about a more objective attitude even to this conception. No good, however, can be done by disregarding the facts of the case. The Roman Pontiff accepts the description of ‘Vicar of Christ on earth’, which seems to all non-Roman Christians to offend the clear

indication in the New Testament that this title can only be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Supreme jurisdiction over all Christians is claimed for the Bishop of Rome. This is held to be contrary to the catholic doctrine of the episcopate, to make no mention of the rights of other estates (particularly the laity) in the Church. Unfortunately these doctrines are officially declared in Roman formulas to be justified by the passages in the New Testament (particularly St Matthew 16.19, 18.18, 28.18; St John 20.23, 21.15; Acts 15.28) which are alleged to award such a primacy to St Peter. This primacy is held to have been passed on and universally acknowledged. The case against the doctrines, which is universally supported by all non-Roman Christians from the Orthodox to the least of the Protestant sects, asserts that the New Testament passages cannot bear this interpretation, that the early history of the Church does not confirm them, and that the papacy has in fact taken these claims upon itself, without catholic authority, in comparatively recent periods of Church history.

8. The 'veneration of the Saints and of their images'. There are certain differences here which might be resolved by a better choice of words. But there is a deeper divergence underlying it without being expressed, related to No. 6 above, i.e. the question of the place which the saints should take in the economy of salvation. The Roman Church would say that the prayers of the saints are effective for us, both in this world and in the next, while the Anglican would say that whereas it is certainly legitimate to think of the whole Church, militant, expectant and triumphant, praying together, yet it is dangerous to think of any prayers as effective for salvation without the ceaseless prayer of Christ himself, which needs no supplement.

9. 'The authority of apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and of the Holy Scriptures'. This is an ancient and fundamental cause of difference. The Anglican Church, in common with all reformed Christendom, gives an absolute priority to Holy Scriptures as the paramount source of doctrine and the ultimate court of appeal in all doubtful questions, though she does accept the 'apostolic traditions' and the councils up to the time of the

divided Church. Even there she does not attribute literal infallibility to dogmas, in the sense that she believes it possible for the Holy Spirit to go on guiding the Church by means of showing up man-made mistakes in past interpretations. The Anglican formulas, admittedly, do not give a really adequate solution to the problem of the authoritative interpretation of scripture to successive generations, and to the people's need from time to time for sure guidance on questions which the scriptures do not mention. But the whole position of authority in religion is now bedevilled by the divisions of Christendom and is insoluble until they are resolved. Most of the 'converts' received into the Anglican Church from Rome in the various provinces of the world from time to time have felt compelled to leave the Roman Church because of the excessive weight of authority centralized in Rome, which they say stifles initiative and denies reasonable liberties of thought, prayer, and investigation. Most Roman Catholics, on the other hand, find the Anglican position on this matter difficult to understand. But it is simply this. The unity of Christendom has broken down through a series of complicated and connected errors in which all (and particularly the papacy) have been implicated. This unhappy situation has persisted for 900 years in its more aggravated form. There is therefore no one group of Christendom which can now speak with 'catholic authority'. Until the time when that authority is reconstituted (and reformed) so as to be evidently acceptable to the large majority of Christians we must do the best we can; and we need never lose sight of the catholic belief that the Holy Spirit is really guiding the Church, in spite of many appearances to the contrary. Certain developments in theological thinking in the non-Roman world, and certain tendencies in the Second Vatican Council do, however, give some hope for the future of this question.

The general difference, therefore, between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church (and for that matter the rest of Christendom) can be said to be that the latter, for the sake of 'catholicity' and unity, deliberately reduces dogma to a minimum, being unwilling to 'lay upon men's shoulders

burdens grievous to be borne'. In this they are not only saving themselves from our Lord's own imputation to the Pharisees but are actually following the principle of the first truly Ecumenical Council of Jerusalem, from which in their first encyclical letter the apostles decided 'to lay upon you no greater burden than those necessary things' (Acts 15.28)—even those necessary things being a few practical suggestions, some of which, by general consent, have since been abandoned! The Church of Rome, on the other hand, carries a very heavy weight of doctrinal formulas, page upon page of them, so great that very few of her laymen have even read those things which in conscience they are required to believe.

It is difficult to suppose that anyone really believes that Christian union can ever be brought about by the rest of Christendom taking upon itself this immense burden of dogma. Although there have been in the past those who supposed they were helping reunion by doing so, the number of them is now very small; and in fact there are large numbers of Roman Catholics themselves who see the impossibility of such a thing, and who rather are trying to find a way out of the difficulty they are in. One of the aims of 'dialogue' must be that, without any recriminations for the past, which we have inherited but not made, we shall try to help one another in our respective difficulties.

This rapid survey of the differences which aggravate the separation from Rome cannot end without reference to three matters of a practical kind which are irritants in these relationships at the present moment. The first is the belief that the Roman Church, when in power in certain countries, is an enemy to the natural liberties of people and does not scruple to ally itself with the civil power to suppress not only other Churches but certain civil rights as well. The second is the disinclination of Roman Catholics in the past to join in any kind of common worship or witness, even in places where Christ is not named, or even in the name of the unity of Christian people—though the Second Vatican Council has stated its intention to rectify this. The third is the notorious question of

mixed marriages, in which, because of the '*Ne Temere*' decree, Roman priests are bound to ask the non-Roman partner in a mixed marriage to sign away his or her right to any say in the religious upbringing of the children. And, further, the fact that Roman discipline as exercised in practice sometimes leads to cruelty and harshness in the interpretation of basic marriage obligations in this matter.

All these categories of difference have been set out to remind the reader of the actual causes of continued separation. It is therefore appropriate next to consider what hope there is that the Second Vatican Council will improve the situation.

4 The Second Vatican Council

More than half this account has consisted of recapitulating the outlines of historical events which have led up to the present situation of division of which we are the heirs, and in stating the present nature of that division. Although these separations have lasted four hundred years, the most serious doctrinal causes of them have happened only in the last century. That is to say that the situation, from that point of view, has worsened considerably in the last hundred years. On the other hand, in the past 25 years, from another point of view, it has improved again. Because in that period (which corresponds to the period in which the non-Roman Churches have been feeling the influence of the 'ecumenical movement') the Roman Catholic Church, at least in the northern countries of Europe, has been experiencing a new and very vigorous reform movement. The effects of this, it is true, are very much less evident in Britain than in France, Holland or Germany. Under the influence of that movement a great revival has been experienced in liturgical, biblical, theological and pastoral studies and practice. In some ways the movement in these countries has progressed towards positions which Anglicans will recognize as resembling their own. Simplified liturgical forms, services in the vernacular languages, great emphasis on the biblical background of theological studies, much more attention to the function of the laity in the Church, an evident determination to restore the central and unique position of our Lord in all branches of theology, an awareness of the estrangement of modern 'secular' man from the Church, the adaptation of old forms of ministry to new needs and so on, are all examples of this tendency. But such reforms as have been achieved have been accomplished against the steady opposition of the centralized governmental departments in Rome (mostly directed by aged Italian cardinals) which

control the Church at the centre, ostensibly in the name of the Pope. This 'renaissance', and the evidence of a domestic 'tug of war', together with an acute awareness of the need for Christian union, were the considerations which moved that great-hearted man Pope John XXIII to call the Second Vatican Council. His general directives to it were to be urgently and primarily concerned with the pastoral needs of the Church; to bring the doctrines of the Church up-to-date for the needs of contemporary man (not by changing, but by restating them as necessary); and to consider what was right for the Roman Catholic Church to do in the matter of the recovery of the unity of Christendom.

It is not possible in this small compass to give a full report of the lengthy proceedings of the Council. It is to be hoped that interested readers will find time to study its discussions and findings at greater length in some of the many reports which will be published at its conclusion. Here we must content ourselves with broad generalizations about its work and a certain amount of guesswork as to its future application. The main idea in the mind of Anglicans who are prepared to think and to pray about these things should be that of thanksgiving to God for what has happened. There has been a considerable spiritual and psychological revolution in the Roman Catholic Church which has both brought them in heart and mind nearer to other Christians, and has committed them irretrievably to the general movement for rebuilding the unity of Christendom. Ideas have been accepted and commended which only a few years ago would have been contemptuously rejected. Certain centuries-old barriers have been broken down, and access has been given to modern knowledge and culture. New leaders have taken over, at least for the time being, the reins of government in the Church: and it seems as though the Pope's proposed administrative reforms will give those same people a more permanent place in the counsels of the Vatican. It is likely that when it is all over the Church will have as its main instrument of government (under the Pope) an international senate of bishops representing every aspect of its life and every area of its operation. There will of course not be wanting com-

mentators who will say that this is far too optimistic an assessment. Those who regard the reunion of Christendom as largely an academic task (and there are too many of them) will point to the notorious doctrinal formulas which aggravate the separation, and will say (quite rightly) that they are all still there, unaltered, in the decrees and constitutions which form the Church's official teaching. But we are not here concerned with being optimistic or pessimistic, but with being realistic, chronicling the facts as they emerge and saying *that in comparison with the position as it was only seven years ago, the present represents a fundamental break with the past and a progress which is real*. This change is represented more in the liturgical and pastoral activities of the Church than in its doctrines. What happens (or does not happen) to paper doctrinal formulas fortunately does not determine or fully express the fundamental things in the life of a Church (as those who officially profess the religion of the 39 Articles should be well aware). But the 'thoughts and intents of the heart' can breathe new life into old dry bones, and in doing so can change them.

If the agenda for the Vatican Council could have been drawn up at Lambeth Palace it could not, from the Anglican point of view, have been much improved upon. All the really deep matters affecting our differences were down for treatment in some form or other. The list of subjects under consideration was remarkably similar to that drawn up for the first Faith and Order Conference of the British Council of Churches at Nottingham in 1964. In most cases the solution of these problems, though far from being what we should hope for, represents a move in our general direction. And in every case the change of spiritual and psychological attitude is more important than the paper results.

The first tangible result of the Council has been the promulgation of the *Constitution of the Liturgy*. Its main recommendations are:—

1. the undertaking of a wholesale reform of the liturgy after the Council;
2. the subordination of private devotions to corporate wor-

- ship—the requirement that people present at a service shall take a conscious part in it;
3. greater emphasis on the ministry of the Word in all services, together with insistence that more extensive and more thorough use of the scriptures shall be made;
 4. a sermon at every principle mass every Sunday;
 5. permissive use of common languages (as distinct from obsolete Latin) and greater freedom for the introduction of local use and custom;
 6. certain relaxations permitting (occasionally) reception of Holy Communion ‘in both kinds’;
 7. restoration of Unction for the Sick to be a general ministry of healing as distinct from a preparation for death;
 8. simplification of the Breviary for parish priests;
 9. the liturgical calendar to be revised to give greater prominence to feasts and commemorations of our Lord.

All this, of course, embodies almost exactly the principles of Cranmer’s reforms, and is most encouraging to us. The thoughtful Anglican will be reflecting whether it is not time for us, too, to undertake a revision of Cranmer’s revision, for 400 years is a long time, and many of his familiar phrases have lost their meaning for the modern world. It is hoped that the new Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure will provide a means to that end. The aim of all reform of services is not, of course, the approximation of one tradition to another, but common endeavour to recover the liturgical unity which has been obscured by separation.

The next principal topic of the Vatican Council has been the relation between *Scripture* and *Tradition* (see page 22). The progress of this has been entirely in a direction towards our own. What have previously been seen as ‘two founts of Revelation’ are now understood as one single source, manifesting itself in two streams. Protestant biblical scholarship has itself shown correspondingly that there was a living tradition at work shaping the scriptures themselves, and also recognizes that the Church must continually be interpreting the scriptures, and must thus be continually concerned with the formation of

tradition. There is a welcome convergence here. Once again, the importance of their discussion has been the newness of the spirit of it, free from arrogant dogmatism, more concerned with humble seeking. One of the best features of it has been the relaxing of the straightjacket of control by the Holy Office (theological department) which has hitherto tended to stifle independent biblical and other scholarship. Roman Catholic students will from now on be more free to publish their conclusions and to enter into comparatively uninhibited discussions with scholars of other communions. The results of this for the future could be most fruitful. One of the main deep causes of our separation is hereby considerably relieved, by the implied admission that there is a place in the quest of truth for something other than blind dogmatic authority.

The decree on *the Church* received its final form at the third session. Here again the spirit of the discussions is more important than its conclusions. The bishops rejected strongly the first draft (prepared by the Roman 'Curia') as being too pompous, too juridical, and as appearing to give almost no value to the existence of 'other Christians'. This decree contained the following developments:—

1. There is an awareness that the Church is composed of sinful men, and that it is therefore in continual need of reform. It is to be thought of as a divine mystery.
2. The papacy is to be understood in the context of the whole college of bishops, in whom the authority given by Christ to the apostles resides juridically and sacramentally.
3. A solemn declaration that there is a real place in the Church's life and ministry for the lay people other than that of subordination to the hierarchy.
4. The institution of a permanent order of deacons (who can be married men) in certain parts of the world.
5. A statement concerning the place and honour due to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This has been deliberately inserted into the decree on the Church to show that the B.V.M. is not a celestial personage but a mortal. The teaching already defined, unfortunately, is not altered, but at least it is stated in such a

way as to try to show its origins in scripture, and to remove unnecessary misunderstandings. For instance, although the title of 'Mediatrix' is used of Mary, this is said in no way to compromise the position of Christ as our 'only Mediator and Advocate'. No amount of explanation or verbal dexterity can ever remove the conviction of the rest of Christendom that Rome is in error here. Words can often contain two interpretations, but not two diametrically opposed meanings. We must take comfort, nevertheless, from the fact that Roman theologians evidently appreciate that much explanation is due over this. An appeal is inserted in the text to all Roman Catholics to be moderate in their address to the mother of their Lord and not to allow their cult of her to stand as a barrier between themselves and the 'separated brethren'.

This all adds up to a considerable development when it is compared with the extreme 'high' theory of the Church which we have previously associated with the Church of Rome. Many of its harsher outlines are softened by other attitudes (which sometimes seem inconsistent to us) in the decree on *Ecumenism*. It does at least ascribe some value to the existence of other Christian communities outside the Church, it recognizes their baptism and some of their ministrations, and admits that there is a reality in their relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. The development of the idea of the corporate authority (and infallibility) of the college of bishops begins to change at least the setting of the papal office. It remains to be seen how this will work out in practice. Nevertheless the original error, as we see it, of identifying the 'one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church' of the creeds with the Roman Catholic Church only, still persists in the minds of many. We now, however, have to adjust ourselves to this new situation that, as with us so in the Church of Rome, there are 'high church' and 'low church' parties, each of whom is raised up to check the exaggerations of the other.

The decree on Ecumenism goes further than that on the Church (as well it might) in recognition of the value of other Churches. The Orthodox Patriarchates (and some others) are

given full recognition as Churches, and as possessing acknowledged sacraments and ministries. Other bodies are recognized as 'ecclesial communities' because they possess some, though not all, of the 'signs' or 'marks' of the true Church. This slightly patronizing attitude is none the less a great improvement on the status of 'heretics and schismatics' which was their lot only a few years ago. It can provide at least a basis for further discussion and for practical co-operation. The decree begins with the words 'the re-integration of the unity of Christendom' which is already an indication of a significant change of attitude. It sounds the death knell of the extreme exclusive attitude which regarded unity as already achieved in the Roman Church, and which therefore identified ecumenism with the process of the conversion and absorption of all other Christians into it. That era is happily over. The Roman Catholic Church is committed to co-operation in discussion, in prayer for unity and in social matters. And that, for the time being, will be the basis of our 'dialogue'. The decree extends its scope to considering a new statement concerning the Jews. It advocates tolerance towards them (because those who are alive at the present moment cannot be held responsible for Christ's death); and expresses its abhorrence of all forms of racial persecution. There was also in the Council's findings a decree on religious toleration and civil liberties such as will enable any who feel themselves aggrieved by intolerance in Roman Catholic countries to appeal to Rome against the alleged misdeeds of any local hierarchy. The proof of this pudding will be particularly in the eating. We look to see if after the Council steps will be taken to modify some parts of the concordats in which the Church of Rome is involved (for example, in Italy itself, in Spain and the Argentine) which impose restrictions on the liberties of non-Roman Christians.

In this brief analysis it is impossible to refer to all the constitutions and decrees which were or will be passed at the Council. Some of them concern directly only the Roman Church itself. Of the others mention need only here be made of three: (1) that on the *Sacrament of Marriage*, in which some light will,

we hope, be shed on the vexed problem of mixed marriages, which has for so long been an irritant in our relationships; (2) that concerning *Studies and Seminaries*, in which more room for manoeuvre could be given to teachers in schools and seminaries. There are already many who would like to introduce their pupils more widely to the riches of scholarship and devotion outside the Roman Church, instead of keeping them, metaphorically, inside closed doors and having to form their theology from carefully selected texts, while excluding from their notice the evidence for a contrary view; (3) that on the *Church in the Modern World*. In this discussion the Roman Catholic Church intends to show itself capable of understanding the quests and difficulties of modern man, and his religious, moral and economic needs so as to be able to minister to them. Thus it is hoped to correct the image which the utterances of some past popes and hierarchies have built up, that the Church is always and everywhere the friend of reaction, and knows no other means of dealing with new knowledge and aspirations than to condemn them.

In this scheme there may be treatment of such subjects as the 'population explosion', family planning, and nuclear war. Those who, like observers at the Council, have experience of other ecclesiastical assemblies will not be surprised if all this large gathering is able to do is to lay down a few general principles and leave it to the Church in the world, and particularly to individual Christians, to solve the problem in detail.

This sketch of the findings of the Council should leave the reader with the impression of great progress and of considerable reform in the Roman Catholic Church, for which we should all be grateful. At the same time, at almost every point it leaves us tantalized with the spectacle of problems left unsolved. (In particular there is no attention to be given to the corpus of doctrines on the Eucharist.) Yet the light of a new age can be seen to be dawning. What were previously matters which could only separate and irritate are already beginning to appear as common problems which can only be solved by Churches who are together. Where we used to criticize we should often find

that we too are overdue for reform. Everywhere there is a new habit of mind (why not acknowledge it as a grace from God?) at work, softening hard lines, resolving prejudices, providing new insights, encouraging solutions, dispelling bitterness, compelling mutual humility and respect, and opening up the distant prospect of better things.

It is essential for the Anglican reader to remember that all that is good at the Vatican Council has been won heroically by the persistence and good sense of those who are our friends, against a constant, discouraging, and often very threatening, conservatism on the part of the departmental hierarchy at Rome, though with the encouragement of both popes. As such it is an answer to prayer. We for our part ought to consider how slow and how hard is the work of liturgical, doctrinal and pastoral reform within the Church of England, and how with us also the persistent conservatism of churchmen at all levels often hampers the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We should take care lest the new energies which these reforms will undoubtedly liberate in the Roman Church after the Council do not show us up as a fossilized, though amiable, period piece, of Reformation vintage, pathetically overdue for reform. It is to be hoped that the Vatican Council will have at least this effect on the Church of England, that it will encourage her to accelerate the tempo of her own reform, and in doing so to find new bonds of union with her Roman Catholic brethren.

5 Prospect

The Second Vatican Council has ushered in a second stage in the ecumenical movement. Or, more strictly speaking, it has made possible the beginnings of the real ecumenical movement: for the real total union of Christendom (as distinct from limited and local amalgamations) can hardly be said to be in view or even under discussion as long as one half of it (and that the more vigorous half) is not totally involved.

We shall have to enter upon 'dialogue' for the moment with the knowledge that the Roman Catholic half of Christendom is entirely committed to a policy of no doctrinal compromise. But most other members of the ecumenical movement, ourselves included, are in it under exactly the same terms. It has been disturbing to discover how many otherwise intelligent people seem to be surprised, and pretend to be disillusioned, because the Roman Catholic Church has not declared in the Second Vatican Council that papal infallibility and the Marian doctrines were all a mistake—in fact that the Pope has not expressed his intention of becoming a good Protestant before entering upon 'dialogue'! The world reaction to the papal encyclical *Ecclesiam Sua* (1964) was evidence of this. But in fairness it must be borne in mind that neither does any other participant in ecumenical dialogue enter it with any such intention of throwing his convictions into a general melting pot. Neither the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor the Ecumenical Patriarch, nor the President of the Lutheran World Federation, nor any other Christian leader is able to commit his Church to 'dialogue' on such terms. But their reaction to the present situation is that though they agree in believing the Church of Rome to be in error on certain matters fundamental to the faith, yet they wish to be intimately associated with her in prayer, in study and in corporate witness and action. The hope then will be that in the

course of that association the warmth of their experience of agreement will thaw out the comparatively small centres of their difference. This approach to the general ecumenical problem seems to be not only the only practical one (if it is to include the Roman half of Christendom) but the right one. For union will presumably not be brought about by the fusion of separated bodies, each of whom is nervously anxious to lose as little as possible of what is theirs in the general amalgam. But it must be won by the coming together and general intercourse of blocs of separated Christians, each of which is conscious of having been entrusted in history by the Holy Spirit with some treasure which it must carry inviolate into the united body. The World Council of Churches principle of 'All in Each Place', although applicable in some places, would be most inadequate for the world as a whole. For what would then be the future of, for example, Spain, or Sweden, where there is an overwhelming preponderance of one type of Christianity and all others have been excluded? The Roman Catholic Church has clearly been given the grace of showing and of guarding the principle that unity must find expression in the voluntary solidarity of diverse rites and nations under one head, professing one faith, worshipping one Lord, receiving one baptism. The evangelical Christian, for his part, must bring with him the treasure of truth that the Church must never exist or work anywhere without consciously declaring the gospel. The Orthodox must be allowed to contribute in full his conception of the truth as an inexpressible mystery. The Anglican must be allowed to show how these things can be made to co-exist peacefully in one body, which then, *and only then*, is entitled to call itself 'catholic', etc. Thus it is not absurd that whole Churches should enter dialogue on the condition that they will not compromise on fundamental truths. We sincerely hope they will not. Although this is the official stated policy of many of the participants, in all of them (Rome not excepted) there are many individuals, and they add up to considerable numbers, who hope for doctrinal restatement of such magnitude as to involve something little short of revision. And that too is promising. It is the kind of situation which the

Holy Spirit can make new if he is allowed so to do. Nobody should presume to say that problems are difficult, let alone insoluble, before we have even begun to discuss them together.

The obvious first task of all Christians of good will who wish to identify themselves with the movement for union is to make war on bitterness and prejudice. That there is much of it still abroad cannot be denied. But it is interesting to note the change of spirit which has been coming over such notorious religious battlefields of the past as Spain and Ireland. This is one of the ways in which apathy is made to serve the Lord's good purposes, because it immediately makes room for tolerance.

The next task is to struggle against ignorance. Many of the antipathies of the present situation are of course due to sheer ignorance of the facts. Why do Roman Catholics do this or that, and why do we do differently? What is Roman Catholic belief about this or that, and what is ours, and why the difference? It must be remembered, of course, that more information on each side will not necessarily by itself bring understanding nearer. To quote one example: a close examination by the average Anglican of the claims of the papacy, and of infallibility, will usually take the enquirer through three phases. In the first he will find that he has misunderstood the doctrines in certain ways, and that there is more to be said for them than perhaps he thought. But then, when he has 'got them straight' and understands them for what they are, he will be able to see how poorly they stand up to the test of modern understanding and interpretation of the scriptures, and even less to an examination of the early history of the Church. Thirdly he will go on to reason that since Christian unity can obviously not be rebuilt on these untenable doctrines, it is therefore up to the rest of Christendom to show that there is another interpretation of the same scriptures and Church tradition which will in fact provide another and better system of Church government. If, as the Protestants do, we reject the high doctrine of the papacy because we say that the Church has only one head, Christ, made ever present in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are under some obligation to see that our alternative theory leads us in practice

not to confusion and division, but to strength and to unity. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ So the whole process becomes challenging and bracing. Entering upon a period of ‘dialogue’ may in some cases recall controversies of which most of us are very tired. But it will now no longer be controversy that we are conducting but ‘dialogue’, that deep seeking for the truth, with no thought of advantage or gain, which intends only to serve the Lord where and how he wills. It is to be hoped above everything that this stage can be entered upon with a deliberate repudiation of ‘convert catching’. There are always involved in ‘ecumenical’ work (if you can call it that) weak people who cannot resist trying to make a ‘convert’. Such people should be transferred to the work of evangelization and should be encouraged (in St Paul’s words) ‘to preach the gospel in the regions beyond, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to hand’ (2 Cor. 10.16).

One of the first fruits of a critical examination of this situation will be the discovery (of something which ought to have been realized for a long time) that we agree on more matters, and on more important matters, than those on which we disagree. Christians on both sides of this divide often speak as if they professed two different religions and worshipped two separate gods. The correction of this error is basic, and must be put deliberately before the consciences of Christians. All we who are baptized together into Christ, and who look for salvation in his name alone, are thereby united in a fellowship which is real, in spite of ecclesiastical differences. To quote a clear example, we who are united in the tradition of the eucharistic feast must not be separated by theories concerning the way in which Christ effects his sacred presence, or concerning the way in which it is related to the one sacrifice on the cross. We have one faith, which finds expression in formulas which differ only in detail. There is perhaps some scope in this situation for a forceful urge for closer relationships to come from the laity. Devout and instructed laymen on both sides should meet and confer. They should contribute to the whole situation the layman’s insights which they alone can see. For there are elements

in these differences which are of solely clerical manufacture, and there are some of the solutions which only the lay mind can formulate. They can contribute to the present difficulties the help which the Church once had from the devout emperors, who presided at some of the first councils. Theology can easily become too professionalized and Churches too hierarchical (none more so than some of the Protestant denominations). Let laymen say that they want to be instructed in the facts of these divisions, and where possible let them find out the facts for themselves. And if they find that Christendom is in any way being kept divided by the professionalism of hierarchies, let them say so. One practical outcome of these new relationships must be a series of informative popular tracts restating the questions at issue in an objective, non-polemical form. And another should be the deliberate withdrawal of contentious, ill-informed bigotry such as has disgraced, for example, some of the anti-papal tracts of the Protestant Truth Society and some of the anti-Anglican publications of the Catholic Truth Society.

A third task must be that of critical self-examination on the part of all concerned. The Pope himself has admitted faults in the Roman Catholic Church which have given distress to other Christians, and which in some notorious cases have actually provoked the separation. Many of the intractable and apparently irremovable obstacles to union will be seen on examination to have been caused in the first place by corporate misuse of God's gifts; and their continuance as obstacles often also to be due to mismanagement of which we all are guilty. For example, it is not difficult to show that the excesses in the doctrines of the papacy of which we complain have partly been provoked by the indifferentism, the indiscipline and the rationalism which have been allowed to spring up in Protestant Churches. Again, those who think of the papacy as a tyranny should look more closely at the apparent inability of the Church of England to accomplish its own reform due to the stranglehold of parliamentary control. On the other hand, Roman Catholics who criticize the Church of England for being too closely allied to the State should remember that that connection dates

from the days when Church and State sought common protection against the aggressive alliances and ambitions of the papacy. And the Church in England can well answer that the State connection in its present form (which, anyway, only exists in the two provinces of Canterbury and York, and not at all throughout the rest of the Anglican Communion) is very much less objectionable both in principle and in practice than some of the concordats which have bound the Roman Catholic Church to reactionary administrations in Italy, in Spain and in certain other countries in recent years. To sum up, there is not one of the so-called ‘obstacle problems’ which does not take on a different aspect when it is approached in a spirit of mutual penitence and self-criticism, and with an objective intention to seek the truth.

Much progress could be made if we were to rethink the words and titles which we use to describe one another. Those in use at the moment, even if they were not coined to be offensive, are very often the catchwords of old controversies, the dangerous epitomes of dated half-truths and understatements. We are really in need of a new set of terms to describe the relationships of this new age. The present use of the word ‘catholic’ in connection only with that part of the universal Church which is under the Roman obedience is totally misleading. The term can only rightly be applied to the whole body of Christians, as it is used in the Creed. And to speak of any baptized Christian as non-catholic is quite inadmissible. To speak of the Greek and Slavonic Churches as ‘orthodox’ (in a sense in which that term cannot be applied to any other Churches) is again misleading and out of date. To describe as ‘protestant’ a whole group of Churches is to suggest that their whole reason for being is rooted in the controversies of the 16th century, as if they had had no history ever since. To speak of one section only of a Church, or a whole group of Churches, as ‘evangelical’ is to misapply a sacred word. For every Church always and everywhere, if it is worthy of the name of Christ, must at least aspire to be at once catholic, orthodox, protestant against error, and evangelical. The very word ‘Christian’ means all those

things, and never less than the sum of all of them. In the Vatican Council we have been able to observe the Church of Rome trying to recover the tradition which we call ‘evangelical’—in her liturgy, in her approach to the Bible and in the pastoral ministry, and in her conception of her social attitudes. It is equally our duty to try to recover in all our dealings the dimension of ‘catholicity’ which is by implication among us all the time.

The impact of this idea upon the English Church should be as follows. First, negatively, we should cease to term one wing of the Church ‘catholic’ as distinct from another—this debasement of the word is lamentable. And it should cease to be thought anywhere that to be ‘catholic’ means merely to wish to copy the liturgical fads and fashions of our Roman Catholic neighbours. Every baptized and practising member of the Church of England is, on his or her own showing, a ‘catholic’ Christian *ipso facto*. It is our own fault if Roman Catholic propagandists take advantage of our inability to live up to our heritage. Secondly, to be ‘catholic’ for the Church of England should mean to be trying to recover in due proportion all the emphases and insights with which the Holy Spirit has endowed the whole Church in all places and throughout all the centuries. It is a hindrance to the ‘whole’ gospel, to say nothing of Christian union, that parishes, groups of parishes, and some seminaries and colleges should be obliged by party trust deeds to preserve the memory of some particular tradition to the exclusion of others. There should be a free flow of inspiration, with no exclusions. Among these traditions, of course, we should not hesitate to look for what is good and honourable in our Roman Catholic neighbours, for they have much to teach us. Chief of these, in England at least, is zeal. Where the Roman Catholic Church is long established in other countries—in Spain, for example, and Italy—she also suffers from ‘indifferentism’ and apathy. But in England Roman Catholics can hold up an example of zeal, man for man, which an Anglican should certainly not be ashamed to copy. And they can give many of us a lesson in regular worship, in season and out of season, regardless of who

the minister is or what he says or does, which is worship for its own sake.

We have here mentioned only the heads of one or two matters in which the Christian body will be very much strengthened, and can only be built up again, by profitable exchange between its sundered parts. And that is not meant to suggest an era of loose forms of association in which a code of behaviour is worked out which is no more than the lowest common denominator of all the bodies concerned, but rather a period of deliberate searching to understand the values and traditions which each holds in separation. In the course of this kind of realistic exchange it will no doubt be revealed by the Holy Spirit how those traditions can be lived and held together. In some cases differences which seemed to be insuperable will be seen to be unreal; in some cases truth will be made to triumph over falsehood: in others truths will be seen to be complementary and not exclusive of one another, and so to be no longer reasons for separation.

In the other direction we hope that our Roman brethren will be able to learn from all the other Churches, from the deep spiritual treasures of the 'Orthodox' tradition and from the insights of the Protestant Reformation. From the Orthodox Christians of the ancient Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch (both of them older than Rome) let them learn that the Church is not a juridical entity, always and everywhere to be totally identified with any human conception of it, but is a deep mystery, transcending all man's arrangements and definitions, continually outgrowing itself and continually showing new reflections of its ancient splendour. And from the Protestant Reformation let them learn (as many of their own teachers are now trying to show them) that the Church has always a twofold duty, one to worship God, the other to declare his Word: and that insofar as it fails to do the second effectively, the former is of diminished value.

All this communication and exchange should be seen against the background of prayerful intention and personal renewal which must be the source and inspiration of any hopes for

eventual reunion. Thus the recovery of truth, the recovery of holiness and the work of restoring unity must go hand in hand. As the present Archbishop of Canterbury has said,

'The sin of disunity is but one aspect of the sinfulness of the members of the Body of Christ frustrating the fulfilment of the prayer of our Lord. Disunity is one aspect of this, lack of holiness is another aspect, and failure to grasp the truth and to present it in simplicity and clarity is another. What is wrong with Christendom is not only that we are divided, it is also that we lack holiness and that we play about with truth. And that being so, it is entirely insufficient to think and talk about reunion unless at the same time we are thinking and talking about reconsecration and recovery of the fulness of truth. That threefold cord cannot be broken.'*

After the Council, then, this 'dialogue', this work of recovering the wholeness of the Church, will be pursued. In the case of the Anglican Churches it will be followed up at two levels: by the relationship between the international Anglican Communion as such with the Vatican Secretariat for Union in Rome; and also, of course, between the local Church of England and their Roman Catholic neighbours in Britain. It will try to find expression not only, or even primarily, in discussion groups for academic questions, but by common action in defence of the gospel and in fulfilling the social duties of the Church towards the people in general.

Anglican Churches all over the world are now involved not only in 'dialogue' but also in practical negotiations for union with 'evangelical' 'protestant' neighbours of many descriptions. Sometimes the picture seems confusing, but the goal is the same. The resemblance of method between the Nottingham Conference of 1964 and the Second Vatican Council was remarkable to those who had the privilege of taking part in both. The essential seems to be that the *whole* picture should always be kept in view, for 'it is the same God that worketh all in all'.

Thus the whole business of the 're-integration of union' (to borrow the first three words of the Vatican Council decree 'on Ecumenism') will enter into a more realistic phase. For the

*Unity, Truth and Holiness. An address given to the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, London 1960

happy relationships which we are pursuing with our Methodist and Presbyterian neighbours, and which we hope eventually to take up with all Christians of good will, can now be seen in due proportion. They will not conflict with one another, but will make for real union, keeping each other always in view. We shall not be content with partial, one-sided union schemes which achieve union by sacrificing truth, but shall aim at total union of 'the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth' (Eph. 4.16).

These evident promptings of the Spirit of God no Christian worthy of the name will wish to resist.

Note: The direction of relations with Roman Catholics in England has now been entrusted by the Archbishop of Canterbury to a special commission. Any enquiries for further information should therefore be directed to:

The Secretary

Archbishop's Commission on Roman Catholic Relations

222 Lambeth Road

London SE1.

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